

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



MIKE COONEY
LT. GOVERNOR

May 3, 2019

The Honorable Corey Stapleton
Secretary of State
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Secretary Stapleton:

In accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, I hereby veto Senate Bill 304 (SB 304), "AN ACT AUTHORIZING MEMBERS OF THE MONTANA LEGISLATURE TO CARRY A LAWFULLY POSSESSED AND CONCEALED HANDGUN ON STATE PROPERTY OPEN TO THE PUBLIC; AUTHORIZING THE HOUSE AND SENATE SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS AND DEPUTY SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS TO CARRY A LAWFULLY POSSESSED AND CONCEALED HANDGUN ON STATE PROPERTY OPEN TO THE PUBLIC; AMENDING SECTIONS 45-8-317, 45-8-328, AND 45-8-351, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

Senate Bill 304 allows legislators and sergeants-at-arms to carry concealed weapons on state property. The bill attempts to address an issue—legislator safety—that I believe has already been addressed and in doing so, provides an unnecessarily broad exception to conceal carry laws for a small group of people.

The safety of legislators, staff, and the public who come to the Montana State Capitol during the legislative session is of great importance to me. In 2011, the Legislative Council addressed the concerns of legislators who felt unsafe during some of the controversial and heated discussions that inevitably take place in the Capitol by initiating a contract with the Helena Police Department to provide additional security. Since the 2013 legislative session, law enforcement officers – who have completed extensive training in deescalating dangerous situations and responding to active shooters – are present during every floor session and on hand throughout each legislative day. Additional officers are also available for controversial hearings and events. I believe that the current level of security in the Capitol is in the best interest of legislators, state employees, and members of the public.

Further, the definition of state property in SB 304 is broad and includes not just the Montana State Capitol, but also the Montana State Hospital or Lewis and Clark Caverns. Allowing special treatment for individuals to carry concealed weapons in these public areas, not because they have the training to respond in an emergency, but because they were elected to public office, is illogical and unreasonable.

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For these reasons, I veto SB 304.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Bullock", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

STEVE BULLOCK
Governor

cc: Legislative Services Division
Scott Sales, President of the Senate
Greg Hertz, Speaker of the House